LOCAL HISTORY
GENEALOGY

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Ann Arbor Observer

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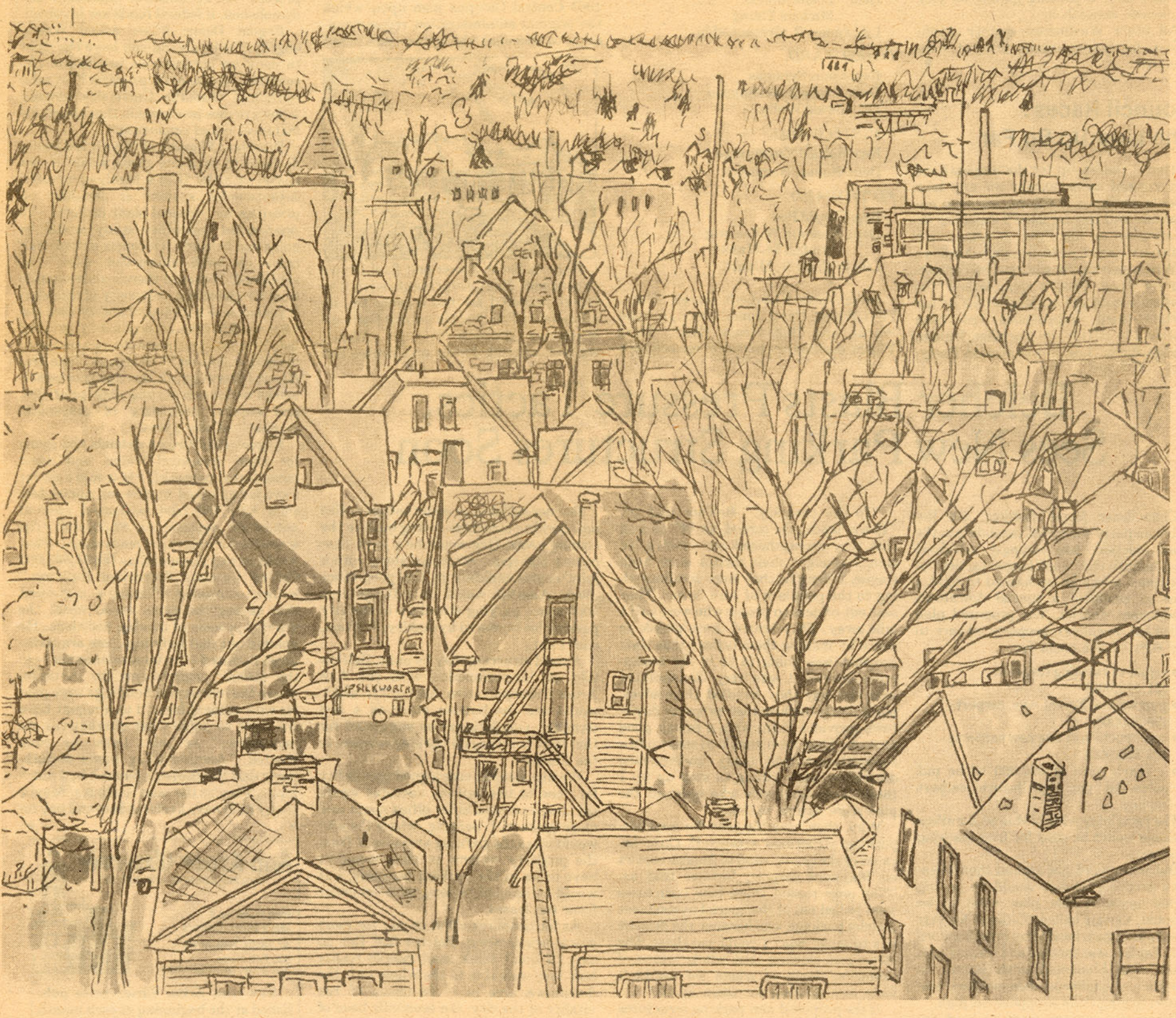


ABOUT OUR COVER: Mary Hunt drew this view looking west from the sixth floor library of the Institute for Social Research. The foreground houses are on the west side of Division; behind them, houses on Hamilton Place. Bethlehem Church is in the center, with the old westside Argus camera complex behind it in the distance and, to the right, the King-Seely/Chrysler factory. Piercing the horizon is the steeple of the Zion Lutheran Church out on West Liberty.

Update

A New Firehouse

A federal grant for $2,000,000 will pay for a new fire station on the city parking lot at Fifth Avenue and Ann behind the historic old fire house. The grant is part of the Federal Economic Development Act, a "jobs bill" designed to reduce unemployment. It requires site work to begin within 90 days. The old fire house, built in 1883 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will be left intact. It could be converted to offices to ease the city's current space squeeze. The 30-year-old garage behind it will be demolished to make way for the new fire station, which will also have a parking garage for city employees beneath it.

All other Washtenaw county applications for funding under this act were rejected. •

Council Races: The Line-Up So Far

Here's the lineup for the mayoral and city council races, except for any last-minute additions in the day between our deadline and the January 3 deadline for candidates to file. The primaries are February and city elections are April 4 .

Where several candidates are competing for their party's nomination, the candidate with the backing of his or her party's ward organization has been starred (*). SHRP = Socialist Human Rights Party. Lib. = Libertarian Party.

MAYOR
Rep. Louis Belcher
Dem. Albert H. Wheeler
Lib. James Warner
SHRP Diana Slaughter

FIRST WARD
Rep. Vlademar C. Jaskiewicz
Dem. Zane Olukans
Gary E. Baker
*Kenneth Latta II

SECOND WARD
Rep. Richard A. Robinson ("Dr. Diag")
*Alan J. Reiner
Dem. *Leslie Morris
Michael Young
Lib. James R. Greenshields

THIRD WARD
Rep. Louis Senunas
Dem. Leslie R. Seelingson
Lib. Gerald Wolke

FOURTH WARD
Rep. Ronald Trowbridge
Dem. Robert Hemeryck

FIFTH WARD
Rep. Gerald Bell
Dem. Kenneth W. Ludwig
*Judith M. Hanks
Lib. William H. Minard

Incumbents Elizabeth Keogh (Dem., First Ward), Carol Jones (Dem., Second Ward), and Bob Henry (Rep., Third Ward), decided not to run for reelection. •

Belcher Blasts Pressure Tactics, Sees New Parking Structures Soon

Councilman Louis Belcher, the Republican party's mayoral candidate in the April election, has strongly criticized what he calls the "bush league tactics" of a citizens' lobby group formed to fight a plan to establish a special downtown assessment district. The proposed plan called for downtown property owners to pay 60% of the costs for:

- repair of existing carports ($1,400,000)
- purchase of Forest Ave. carport ($800,000)
- construction of two new carports ($2,350,000)
- a yearly sum of $70,000 to be put aside to pay for future carport repairs.

The remaining 40% of this $5.5 million package would be paid for from parking revenues.

But when word got around that downtown property owners would be paying higher taxes if this plan were to be adopted, a group called "Citizens for Fair Taxation," spearheaded by local landlord Dan Kaplan, was formed and central Ann Arbor was blanketed with letters to merchants, landlords, homeowners and renters urging them to oppose the plan.

When city council went on and approved the plan this December, it axed the provision for the two new structures, thereby cutting the tax burden in half. Because the Republicans had been more enthusiastic about building new parking structures than the Democrats, some have suggested that the Republican councilmembers had knuckled under to the landlord pressure.

"To the contrary," Belcher told us. "Those landlords turned us off so bad that they strengthened our resolve. In fact, I thought their tactics were bush league. I thought they were condescending to the populace of Ann Arbor. They sent out notices to people who were half a mile away. They scared those people to death by making them believe that their property was going to be in the assessment district. I was very disappointed with the way they handled themselves, particularly because their property downtown provides them with a pretty good revenue. They were unable to step up to a committment that many businessmen downtown were willing to step up to. I think those landlords who opposed the plan were acting selfishly."

Why, then, was the plan for two new parking structures scrapped? Only because of the urgent need to finance repairs on Maynard carport, Belcher told us. "The only reason those new structures were pulled out of the special assessment district package was because the district has to move *now*. I could see those new structures slowing that whole means of financing down to where we wouldn't have any funding for them at all."

If the proposed new parking structures were to be included in the special assessment package, their designs and locations would have to be spelled out exactly for bonding purposes. This would take some months to complete, thus holding up the money needed to pay for carport repairs. These repairs, especially for Maynard carport, are urgently needed, so the city can't dawdle.

Belcher still sees as many as four or five new parking structures being built in the coming years. One would be a joint city-county 500-space structure along with a joint courts building in the post office block. Another would be a fringe area 1000-space parking structure in the city parking lot bordered by Ashley, William, and First.

A third structure may be built, Belcher told us, in conjunction with the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, which would use the bottom story as a bus terminal. One location he suggested for that facility is the city parking lot next to the library.

Finally, Belcher sees a good possibility for "one or two private ventures where the developer combines office space and store space with parking, where the city would lease the parking areas back from the property owners so they wouldn't have to be in the parking business, but would be assured of long-term revenues from the leases."

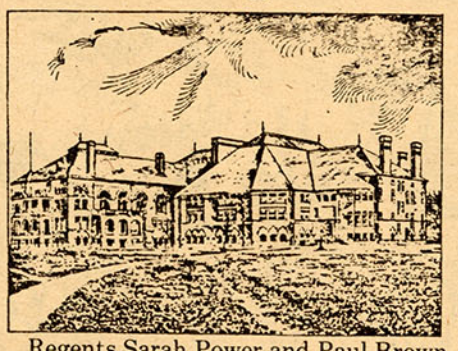
As for those reluctant to pay for more downtown parking, Belcher had this to say: "I don't think most people realize how very valuable to the whole city the downtown area is — in terms of the vitality of the city, the economic base of the city, the property values of the city. Few appreciate the indirect benefits from having a healthy downtown. The antithesis of what we're talkng about here is Pontiac's downtown. Store after store deserted, and rot which spreads out from the core of the city. It's really sad. That to me is really what we're talking about: maintaining the viability of downtown." •

Fleming Says Saving Twin Gyms Upsets Priorities

After hearing the presentation of the "Recycle Barbour-Waterman" committee at the December 16 regents' meeting, the administration decided to postpone its recommendation on whether or not to conduct a feasibility study to repair and renovate the 1890-vintage gyms. The regents' decision is expected at their January 27-28 meeting.

Recycling advocates are pushing for a feasibility study. They mentioned

- the growing demand for amateur athletic facilities, especially among college women
- the study, renovation, and reuse of similar buildings on other college campuses
- the present-day irrelevancy of the 1963 Central Campus plan upon which the original administration recommendation to demolish the gyms was based



Regents Sarah Power and Paul Brown expressed disappointment with the report prepared for the regents by administrator Bill Sturgis on the Barbour-Waterman decision. At the August regents' meeting Power and Brown had intended to request a detailed feasibility study of the gyms' potential for reuse to be conducted by a broad-based committee of diverse experts. But apparently their request was rephrased and approved as a far less specific directive to prepare a report on the gyms.

A surprise came when Mike Washo, deputy director of the Michigan History Division of the Department of State, made an unexpected announcement that the History Division, having been asked to assess the historical and architectural merit of the gyms, concluded that the entire central U-M campus "has sufficient historic interest to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. The History Division had, in fact, nominated the central campus (including Rackham, the Law Quad, and the Diag area) to the National Register, he announced. National Register designation necessitates a review process before historic buildings are demolished, if federal funds are involved.

Regent Deane Baker asked Washo angrily, "Why should you have the right to deny an autonomous institution the constructive use of its property?" Washo countered that the University already follows review processes in the case of, for instance, equal opportunity.

President Fleming obviously felt that a decision to save the gyms would wreak havoc with the U-M's highly-structured departmental system of deciding on priorities for physical plant projects. An open-ended feasibility study would be pointless, he said. "Of course a study can come up with alternative uses," he explained, "because there's an insatiable need for space at a university of this size. But you have a 95% probability that the uses wouldn't be on anybody's priority list. How do you square the two decision-making processes?" he asked, "one traditional process built through the departments with *them* stating their priorities, and another consisting of grassroots support" of the gyms.

Regent Paul Brown defends the gyms for their historical value and their recreational potential. "It would cost far more for an equal number of square feet than $250,000 (the estimated cost of immediate repairs) or $2,500,000 (the estimate for extensive renovation). That would be way cheaper than the $4,500,000 Central Campus Recreation Building." Brown countered Fleming's argument that saving the gyms would upset the priority process of making decisions. He pointed out that building costs are sometimes financed in an unusual manner — in the athletic department, for instance, where the intramural buildings were paid for with student fees. "I as a regent have the right to judge what alternatives are reasonable," he said. Later he commented, "Another thing that's disturbing is that the students haven't had much input. They're the ones it affects. Maybe they would have a referendum and pay for it." •

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Update/continued

A Bizarre String of Poisonings Has Left No Tell-Tale Clues

The V.A. Murder Trial: Two Theories Will Clash

Filipina Narciso, 30 and Leonora Perez, 32, the two nurses accused of poisoning at least 16 patients at the Veterans Administration Hospital. No evidence which would clearly absolve or implicate them has thus far been made public.

Shortly after midnight on August 16, 1975, the four-person nursing crew of the Veteran Administration Hospital's intensive care unit had just finished their eight-hour shift. But that night, instead of going directly home, they were told to assemble in the hospital's lobby, where an FBI agent would talk to them. They were told that an investigation of breathing failures among patients under their care was about to begin.

Lasting ten months, that investigation cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and culminated in the grand jury indictment of two V.A. nurses on five counts of first degree murder due to poisoning, eleven counts of poisoning, and one count of conspiracy to commit murder.

The crimes cited in the indictment had been committed over at least a five week period, from mid-July to mid-August, 1975. They are unusual crimes—administering a type of drug which inactivates the muscles that make breathing possible, thereby causing death unless an artificial breathing device is quickly connected to the affected patient. In most instances, nurses and doctors (including the two accused nurses) were able to rescue the patients from suffocation. In at least five cases, help apparently did not come quickly enough.

The poisonings began some time after the July 4th holiday. Because the effect of the poison was to mimic a not uncommon phenomenon in an intensive care unit—a breathing failure—it took some days for the medical staff to realize that there might be a single explanation for the increased rate of breathing failures.

Nurse Frank Burns was the first to report the more frequent breathing failures. He had noticed that many of the victims had been routinely recovering from surgery and were unlikely candidates for this kind of problem. In the second week in July, he contacted the hospital's chief of surgery, Dr. Duane Frier, suggesting some type of drug contamination might be involved. A check was made, but nothing suspicious was found.

Dr. Anne Hill, chief of anesthesiology at the hospital, was also becoming more and more concerned that some abnormal factor was causing the increased breathing failures. But it was not until the afternoon of August 15, when three patients in quick succession were poisoned, that Dr. Hill was able to discover the actual cause of the failures. She was at the hospital at the time and was able to see first hand that the afflicted patients were in an extreme state of muscular relaxation—exactly like the state a patient is in after being administered the drug Pavulon for surgical purposes. She gave each of the afflicted patients an antidote designed to counteract the effects of Pavulon and discovered that each of them readily recovered. Anne Hill had just discovered that there was a poisoner in the hospital. That night an FBI agent came on the scene, and no more poisonings occurred.

What makes these crimes bizarre is not only the sophisticated method used, but the obscure motive which must have been involved. The poisonings at first were seen as the acts of a single sadistic madman. Another theory posited that the poisonings were the acts of someone with a pathological need for excitement, much like an arsonist. It was therefore a shock to everyone when the investigation focused on two Filipino nurses, Filipina Narciso, 29, and Leonora Perez, 31. Both had excellent reputations as unusually caring and conscientious nurses. To this day, their fellow nurses refuse to believe in their guilt. A widespread community feeling has developed that the nurses are the victims of a grotesque FBI mistake.

We will find out this February just why Federal Prosecuter Richard Delonis thinks these two nurses are guilty. At best, the information thus far made public would provide an appearance of the nurses' guilt, but hardly the overwhelming probability of guilt needed to convict. Some observers believe Delonis will introduce more substantial evidence during the trial.

The Narciso and Perez murder trial begins February 1 in a Detroit federal courtroom. Until the trial gets underway, it is impossible to know just how strong the state's case against the accused nurses is. There are two opposing theories of the case, however, which appear to be the explanations respectively of the prosecution and defense. The first can be called The Theory of the Overworked Nurses, the second, The Theory of the Overzealous FBI Agents.

THE THEORY OF THE OVERWORKED NURSES

In July of 1975, the nurses at the V.A.'s intensive care unit were a weary lot. Vacations taken by some of the nurses in the unit meant that the remaining staff was working as many as 14 days in a row. And because of a sharp increase in the number of surgery cases that July, a typical nurse's shift was hectic, to say the least—a continuous string of responsibilities from sign-on to sign-off that left most of them exhausted at the end of their shift.

Just three months before, in April of 1975, 54 of the hospital's 114 nurses had signed a petition requesting that staffing be increased to bring up the quality of nursing care given the patients. That petition, so far as the nurses in the intensive care unit could see, did little good. They continued to have a complement of twelve nurses in their unit. If anything, due to the increased work load, things were worse in July than they had been in April when the petition was signed.

What could make the hospital administration realize that the nurses were being overworked? One tactic—an extreme one, to be sure—would be to induce in patients a natural-looking medical crisis that would require massive amounts of manpower to correct. Such emergencies—for example a heart or breathing failure—produce a dramatic series of events in the hospital: a "Code 7" is flashed throughout the hospital, and all available medical personnel rush to the afflicted patient's bed and begin appropriate life-saving procedures, with life and death hanging in the balance. A rash of Code 7's could thus be a vivid means of convincing a tight-fisted administration that more personnel was needed in the hospital.

While no one in his or her right mind would resort to such tactics to protest working conditions, conceivably the stress both from overwork and from outside factors could severely reduce one's personal judgment and cause one to contemplate such drastic measures.

If one were to deliberately cause Code 7's, a relatively simple means would be to slip a small amount of a clear liquid drug called Pavulon into the tubes of those patients already being fed interven ously. Pavulon is a drug used to inactivate the breathing muscles during surgery, so the patient doesn't fight the surgical process. Surgical patients are hooked up to a device which sends oxygen down to the lungs. If someone outside of surgery were to get a dose of Pavulon, he would stop breathing within a few minutes. Such a patient quickly turns blue. If spotted quickly enough, or if his signals to a nurse were heeded, a Code 7 would be called immediately and nurses and doctors would come running to reverse the condition by artifically pumping oxygen down to the lungs.

It isn't known just what all the evidence is that the prosecution will muster to implicate nurses Narciso and Perez in the poisonings. It is known that both nurses were on duty when the poisonings (said to be at least 20 in all) occurred. At least two patients may have seen either Narciso or Perez just before suffering the effects of a poisoning. And following one of the few poisonings to occur outside the 11-bed intensive care unit, both Narciso and Perez were spotted in the vicinity.

It appears that the prosecution's case will be built on a large quantity of circumstantial evidence, each piece of which would not be damning alone, but perhaps enough in totality to make a case. Therefore the trial may last months before all of this evidence can be presented.

THE THEORY OF OVERZEALOUS FBI AGENTS

When the FBI was called in to investigate the VA murders, the image of the federal law enforcement agency was at an all-time low. The late J. Edgar Hoover was being vilified. Unauthorized FBI activities were being made public. And the agency was frustrated in its attempt to find Jimmy Hoffa's daylight abductors. When it became evident that foul play on a massive scale was involved in the Ann Arbor V.A. Hospital (a federal institution which comes under FBI auspices), as many as 27 agents a day flooded the hospital and interviewed each of the hospital's 700 employees. No expense was spared, from bringing in an expensive expert hypnotist from Boston to jog the memories of surviving patients, to perfecting a method by which Pavulon can be detected in the bodies of murdered patients dug up from their graves for the purpose.

The FBI wanted to solve the case badly, and circumstantial evidence quickly caused agents to zero in on the intensive care unit, where most of the poisonings occurred—and then to Narciso and Perez in particular, when it became clear that they were on duty during the incidents. Agents interrogated both Narciso and Perez intensively—sometimes six hours at a time. The nurses report that the agents used intimidating tactics, telling them that their guilt was certain, and that they would make it easier on themselves if they confessed.

The FBI locked in on Narciso and Perez from the very beginning, the theory goes, and proceeded to spend around a million dollars to accumulate enormous quantities of material on the case. (Defense attorneys have already spent some $3,000 just to xerox more than 1,000 pages of material gathered by the FBI.) To leave the case unsolved would be a humiliation to the beleaguered FBI, another spectacular failure in an agency which prides itself on its spectacular successes.

Faced with the overwhelming amount of testimony generated by the FBI, the grand jury hearing the case indicted the two nurses, perhaps more out of respect for the quantity than the quality of the evidence presented.

Whether or not either of these two theories is valid is a question the impending trial may or may not answer. We're told it will be a technical trial; methodological issues such as the ability to detect Pavulon in a victim and the use of hypnosis to elicit testimony will take up considerable time alone. •

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Update/continued

Complaints Enforce Clear-Sidewalk Law

Snow-packed or slush-filled downtown sidewalks wouldn't indicate it, but there *is* a city ordinance requiring property owners or tenants to keep their sidewalks clear of ice and snow. It's enforced on a complaint basis only, however, due to lack of funds for contracts with snow removal services. So if you want to assert your rights as a pedestrian and encourage the clearing of certain offending sidewalks, you could call the department of Streets, Traffic and Parking at 994-2818 to complain. STP will give offenders a warning on a red ticket; if the snow or ice isn't cleared in 12 or 24 hours (depending on whether it fell at nighttime or during the day), the city will do the job and charge the property owner for it. •

Joint City-County Building Studied

The machinery has been put into motion for the city and county governments to get together and see if something can be worked out so that a jointly-used structure (including courtrooms and a 500-space parking structure) can be built. A jointly-used facility has one major attraction to both governmental bodies: it is less costly to go in on such a project together, than to build separately. Four county commissioners and four city council members have been appointed to a committee which will begin meeting in early January to study and discuss the possible venture.

The land most likely to receive this city-county committee's attention covers the block on which the old post office on Main Street is located. The county already owns one building on the block and a large portion is taken up by the post office. It is, in fact, the impending vacancy of the old post office, once the new federal building is opened, that has prompted the city and county to get together at this point and see if they can meld their building needs. The federal government will soon put the post office building on the market. When this happens, both the city and the county, who have first bidding rights, want to be in a position to take advantage of those rights. But first they have to decide if they want to build together, and if so, if the post office block is the most desirable site.

If the city and county do decide to build a joint structure at this location, their combined space requirements would mean that the buildings on that block now facing the County Building would likely have to be demolished, a county official told us. •

Visitors Bureau Outdoes Hopes In First Year

After one year in operation, the Ann Arbor Conference and Visitors Bureau has booked $1,014,000 worth of new business for 1977 and 1978, according to bureau director Dave Scully, and that only counts hotel rooms. This translates into about three million total dollars spent in the city, including restaurants, gifts, entertainment, etc., using an accepted rule-of-thumb in the hospitality trade that hotel rooms equal a third of total expenses.

A 2-percent room tax, approved by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, supports the bureau's activities. A division of the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce, the Conference and Visitor's Bureau promotes Ann Arbor as a regional convention center and tourist destination with phone solicitations, direct mail programs, and, last September, a Fall Fling Weekend for likely prospects that included the Michigan-Wisconsin game. Last year's budget was $120,000, including nearly $40,000 for advertising. This year Ann Arbor's attractions will be touted in regional editions of *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, in various Michigan and Ohio newspapers, and on billboards. Billboards don't come cheap. One on I-94 at Metro Airport will be leased for four months at $1,600 a month.

Dave Scully and Cathie Sutterley of the Ann Arbor Conference and Visitors Bureau work out of the Chamber of Commerce offices at 207 East Washington.

"Conferences of less than 150 people are our bread and butter," Scully said, but the bureau has scored some much larger catches, like the 1000-person convention of the Michigan Association of Funeral Directors, which will use the 30,000-square-foot U-M track and tennis facility this spring. (There are only two Michigan convention centers of that size, Cobo Hall and the Grand Rapids center.) Because of the University's financial squeeze, University officials take a more flexible attitude toward the use of U-M facilities by non-university groups today. The extra income from rental fees can make University units more self-sufficient.

So far the Bureau has lured groups ranging in size from the Michigan State Bowling Association (10,400 room-nights) to the Celiniks (a Finnish fraternal organization, 10 room-nights). The list of organizations coming to Ann Arbor so far in the next two years reflects the specialized diversity of American social and professional organizations, from figure skaters and water skiers, to social workers and rehabilitation specialists, from the Daughters of the American Revolution to mothers of twins.

Along with Dave Scully, Cathie Sutterley, the bureau's sales manager, contacts likely prospects, and Gwen Zak, account representative, does the legwork for arrangements. •

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The December 22 "free day" — the city's gift to its citizens — parcelled out between $13,000 and $14,000 worth of holiday goodies, ranging from 1291 free dog licenses at $5 a crack to 1092 free skating sessions at city indoor rinks. No parking tickets were issued, and parking structures were full all day. Harry Kerr, assistant to the city administrator, considered the day a big public relations success. •

Capital Budget Faces Council; It's a Wish List Of Projects

The capital improvements budget and plan is long (75 pages this year, with 51 pages of attached comments), it's complicated (it deals with twenty kinds of bonds, grants, and funds which confuse any novice, including new councilpeople), it's not glamorous, but it's important. All major city capital projects, including roads and transportation, buildings, parks, sewers, and water systems, must be included in the budget.

To coordinate and schedule major capital outlays, Michigan law requires cities to adopt a capital improvements budged (CIB) for one year in advance and a capital improvements program (CIP) for five years ahead—that is, until 1982. The budget begins as a compilation of funding requests from city departments, which must be reviewed and commented on by the Planning Commission, then passed on, along with comments of citizens' groups like Ann Arbor Tomorrow, the Ecology Center, and the Citizens' Association for Area Planning (CAAP), to city council for final changes and approval. Council will continue discussing it at a working session on January 6, in hopes of adopting it January 10.

In practice, department heads tend to include "wish list" budget projects which are not necessarily financially affordable or politically feasible, just so the project will be in the CIB/CIP if some special federal funding comes along. That makes the need seem more legitimate. For example, $2,500,000 is included for the city share of a new city/county building complex — a project that is now at an extremely preliminary stage — and $1,515,000 is included for a major new parking structure. Both projects would be much studied and debated before council would approve final appropriations; listing in the CIP budget is simply an official foot in the door.

A separate introductory section of this year's CIB/CIP budget lists proposed downtown projects. They range from distant dreams like a greenways system between Bach School and Wurster Park, to a raft of oft-discussed parking structure improvements, to basic items like curb, gutter and sidewalk reconstruction. Several projects contingent on the approval of the Circulation Plan are listed, including $52,000 in feasibility studies for controversial road improvements recommended in the plan, which Council will probably vote on sometime in January One is the Liberty-William one-way pair, proposed by the streets and planning departments to relieve the congested intersection at Main/Packard/William. Ann Arbor Tomorrow and CAAP have opposed it on the grounds that the faster traffic on one-way streets would spoil the pedestrian character of Liberty Street. Extending South Fifth Avenue through Wines Field to Hoover is also listed for a $30,000 feasibility study, as is the widening of Fuller and Depot, for $15,000. If these studies are approved in the Circulation Plan, they would be paid for from the city's general fund or a federal CIB/CIP page three grant.

Copies of the CIB/CIP budget, complete with index and glossary of financial terms provide a glimpse into the future plans, ideas, and fantasies of city officials. •

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Update/continued

Restaurants Grow

Downtown restaurants continue to expand. The new area of The Cracked Crab, 112 W. Washington, is now open. The former wine shoppe at the Capitol Market is now Johnny's, a take-out sandwich shop owned by Craig Minidis (son of "Mr. Mini") and John Kokales of the Capitol Market. Olga's, Ann Arbor's second Greek fast food cafeteria, has replaced Gino's on State at Washington.

The Old German at 120 W. Washington is supposed to be open (at last!) in a month or two, without the expansion into 118 W. Washington originally envisioned. The Athenian, 120 E. Washington, will expand into the former Tech Hi Fi space next door and offer live Greek music on weekends, performed by owner Thano Vorris and others. The Central Cafe, 334 S. Main, will add a rear terrace eating area in spring. And Ned Duke, owner of Mr. Flood's Party, is planning a new restaurant for 118 W. Liberty when the present tenant Leo Ping Restaurant's lease is up. Henry Lum, owner of Leo Ping's, is looking for new space.

The Whiffletree, 208 W. Huron, will begin work soon on a seafood market where Consumer Beef and Cheese is now at 216 W. Huron. Consumer Beef and Cheese is trying to relocate downtown.

The same fresh seafood that's served at the Whiffletree restaurant will be for sale next door within three to six months. Some if it is air freighted from Foley's in Boston. The Whiffletree has also purchased the building at 110 N. First (directly behind the restaurant), occupied by Atwell-Hicks engineers and surveyors. That firm will stay on in one portion of the building, while the Whiffletree will expand into the other. Hobbs and Black are the restaurant's architects; design plans have not been decided.

Barely a month after the Cafe Creole (formerly the Depot House Cafe) at 415 S. Ashley was granted a long sought-after liquor license, the partnership behind the restaurant-to-be dissolved. Jayna Eckler, who still owns the former Ann Arbor Railroad Station built in 1896, is now trying to lease or sell it. •

Renovation Review

Renovations of downtown commercial and office space are proceeding more or less on schedule. Starting this month, 113 South Fourth Ave. (once the home of Good Morning Michigan) will house Gallery One, an art gallery transplanted from Findlay, Ohio, which shows contemporary artists. The building has been renovated and redesigned inside by space planner Estelle Schneider and partner Bonnie DeLoof, the nucleus of Concept IV downtown real estate developers. Claire Spittler, the gallery's owner, will live in one of the two upstairs apartments.

Concept IV's work on their newly-acquired Darling Block at Liberty and Fifth Avenue, together with the adjacent building at 213-219 East Liberty, is still in planning stages. They are analyzing the downtown commercial and office markets and looking for a quality restaurant tenant for the project, dubbed "East Liberty Plaza." Lawyers and architects have already signed leases for upstairs office space.

Down the street at Liberty and Main, work will start in mid or late January on the racquetball courts to be installed in the third floor over the Sugar Bin Bakery. Bloomfield Hills lawyer Peter Vestevich and nine other investors in the building-plus-racquetball club venture are finalizing financial arrangements and taking demolition bids to remove the front of 109 West Liberty (the former office of the Millard Press). That small building, increased one story in height, will become the entryway, stairs, and elevator to the racquetball courts. Racquetball fees are expected to be $40 a year for membership plus $8 an hour for court use.

The Millard Press, which has been at that location for over 75 years, is looking for other quarters. The 6,000-square-foot second-floor space over the bakery will be completely modernized and leased as office space—to a single tenant, Vestevich hopes. The empty storefront at 302 S. Main, scene of a fire last summer, is not yet leased, but there are several interested tenants.

Across the street at 303 S. Main, work on the new Lucky Drugs store has been proceeding smoothly after the near-debacle last summer, when a load-bearing wall was mistakenly removed. Dan Kaercher, Lucky Drugs' owner, hopes to be in by February.

The former Woolworth building at 214 S. Main has finally been leased to Ewing Furniture Company of Brighton, after two and a half years of frustrating three-way negotiations between real estate agent Morrie Dalitz and interested parties here, the Woolworth regional real estate office in Illinois, and the Woolworth directors in New York. •

Leisure Notes

Six outdoor natural ice rinks are ready for the skating season, at West Park, Northside Park (next to Northside School), Allmendinger Park (on Pauline at Edgewood), Burns Park, Scheffler Park (Huron Parkway at Edgewood) and on Champagne Drive in Stoneybrook.

Making each rink is over a two-day job, requiring round-the-clock attention from Parks Department work crews, according to maintenance supervisor Jack Kerr. Then attention is needed only at night, to sweep off snow and to build up scratched or melted ice.

January promises good skating all month, but by February the sun's higher angle can melt the ice at some locations quite quickly even if the air temperature stays below freezing.

The natural rinks program cost $40,000 for 36 days of skating last year.

The South University Neighborhood Park at South University and Walnut has a much more modest natural rink built by neighborhood volunteers. •

A recital of art songs and lullabies in eleven languages will be given by Polish opera singer Alina Drychova on January 26 at 8 PM in the Rackham Auditorium. The program, sponsored by the Ann Arbor Multi-Ethnic Alliance and the Near Eastern Languages department, is free of charge. •

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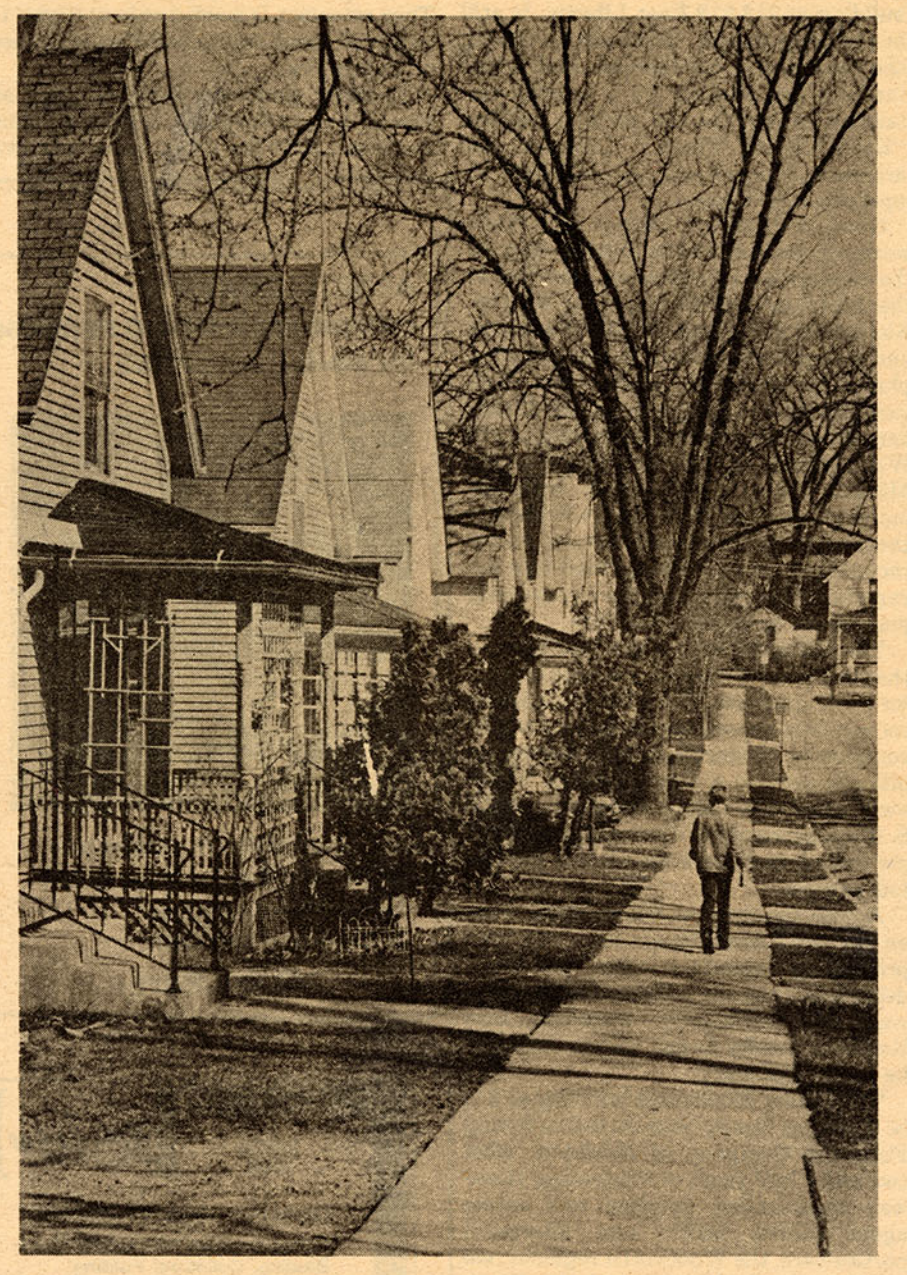
Update/continued

It Would Protect an Entire Environment, Not Just Outstanding Buildings

The Old West Side Ordinance

For nearly three years the Old West Side Historic District Study Commission has been working up to a proposed ordinance to designate a substantial part of the Old West Side a historic district. The study committee is now beginning to discover, as have the pet-control ordinance group and the sign ordinance group before it, that the final stages of the ordinance-approval process involve renewed questioning from all corners, just when the study committee wants to wrap things up and be done.

The proposed historic district would be a pioneer instance of a large area (including nearly 900 structures) being designated historic and protected as a total environment, not just because of a few outstanding individual buildings. (Ann Arbor's two existing historic districts cover only 13 landmark structures.)



Ann Arbor Bank

The Old West Side is an archetypical American neighborhood of the first decades of this century. It is primarily composed of simple brick and clapboard houses enlivened by turned or sawn wood ornamental trim. Together, they form rhythmic rows of peaked gables facing the street. These homes typically have generous front porches and side yards with lots of mature trees. All those elements of the environment—gables, open porches, side yards, trees, and building materials — are what the ordinance seeks to protect, through a series of preservation standards spelled out in detailed descriptions and formulae worked out by the 18-member study committee. (By city ordinance the study committee consists of all members of the Historic District Commission plus other interested parties, in this case, Old West Side Association members including Clarence Roy, Kit Johnson, John Baur, Marsha Giegler, Peter DeLoof, Martin Lee, Frank Waterman, Bill Heldreth, and Joyce Hannaum.

The Old West Side Association had worked openly and conducted an intensive, neighborhood-wide information program. They distributed illustrated summaries of both phases of the study committee's report to every house in the Old West Side, with announcements of the public hearings and requests for comments. Only two angry comments were received — one from a commercial property owner who wanted out of the district, and one from a residential owner who wanted in. A few older residents have expressed concern to the city but won't appear at public hearings.

Next the study committee sent its report and recommended ordinance to Planning Commission for review, before sending it on to council for approval. Administrative memoranda to the Planning Commission from the Planning Department and Acting City Attorney Bruce Laidlaw raised some questions about the final report on the ordinance. These internal memoranda were used as the basis for a prominently-displayed *Ann Arbor News* article depicting a conflict and impasse between city administrators and the study committee. The factual misconceptions created by the article may undo the effects of the Old West Side Association's information campaign. The ordinance does not, as the newspaper article suggested, prohibit screening side porches except when they are continuations of front wrap-around porches. Nor does it say anything about removal of small trees. It would, however, allow removal of mature trees over 10" in diameter only with the approval of the Historic District Commission. No provisions of the ordinance would be retroactive; no building presently nonconforming would be forced to conform.

Acting City Attorney Laidlaw, Planning Department staff, and study committee members (including their legal counsel Peter DeLoof) will be meeting to work out problems with the ordinance before sending it on for Planning Commission comments and council approval some time in January (they hope).

Laidlaw's main concerns are these:

1. The area included under the ordinance is so large that it contains numerous existing buildings which would not conform to new standards, especially the height limitations and setback requirements.
2. The ordinance as drafted leaves definition of many preservation standards up the the judgment of the Historic District Commission.

The Old West Side's environmental application of historic district legislation is new and therefore raises more problems than conventional historic district ordinances which protect certain outstanding buildings only. Both Laidlaw and Marc Rueter of the Planning Department staff prefer a somewhat more flexible, less formal approach instead of the ordinance as drawn up by the study committee. Rueter mentioned Chapel Hill, North Carolina's historic district ordinance, which calls for a "certificate of appropriateness" from the Historic District Commission, according to guidelines established in the ordinance. The commission could thus give design advice and guidance to owners; if an owner disagreed with the commission's decision, he could appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals rather than bringing the matter to Circuit Court.

The Old West Side Association wants a formal ordinance to augment neighborhood planning and its own voluntary design advisory service. An ordinance, it believes, will be more visible and have more clout. Despite their reservations, attorney Laidlaw and planner Rueter think a satisfactory ordinance might be worked out. •

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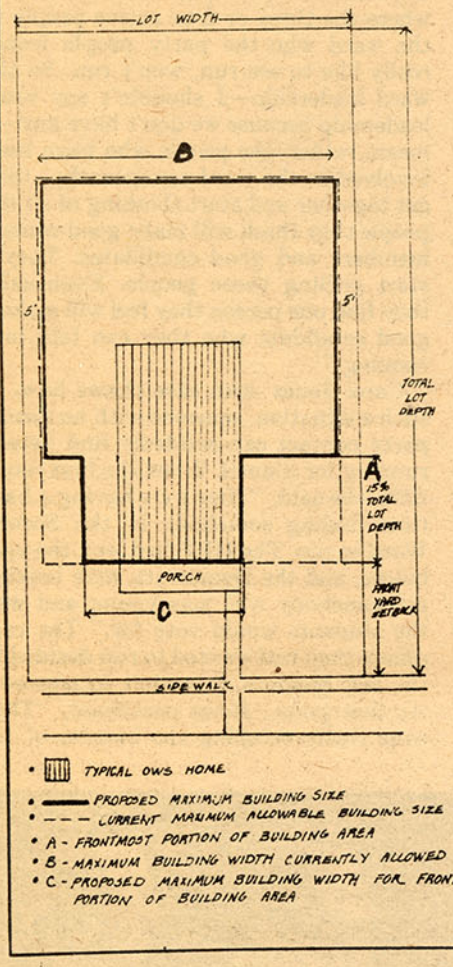
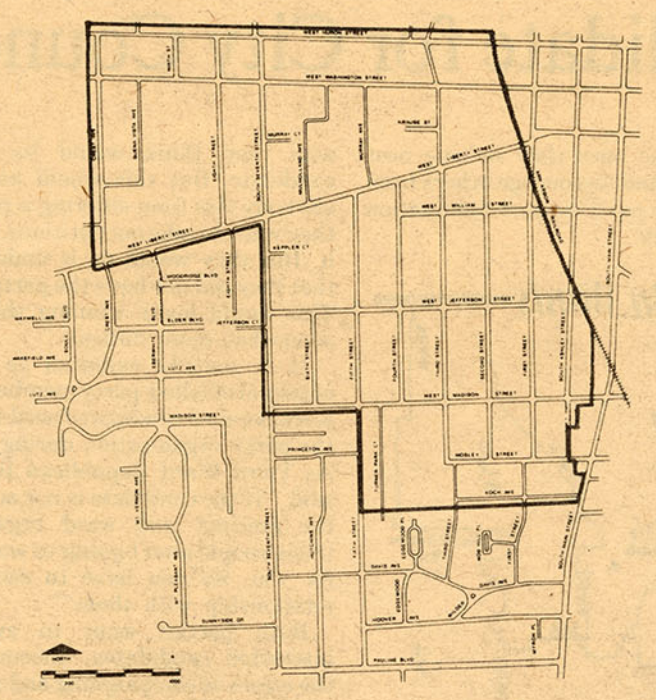
A Summary of the Proposed Ordinance

Building-to-lot Relationships

The final report recommends that in single- and two-family areas the allowable building width be reduced only in the frontmost portion of the buildable area. Specifically this regulation would cover area A in the diagram, or a distance behind the front yard set-back line equivalent to 15% of the lot depth--20 feet on a standard lot depth of 132 feet. The new maximum building width in this part of the lot (distance C in the diagram) is determined by a formula which becomes less strict as lot sizes get smaller.



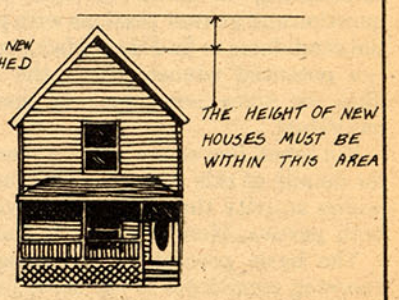


Building Height

Continuity of building height and scale is characteristic of Old West Side streetscapes and an important feature to retain. A building which is much taller than its neighbors breaks the line of the view down the street; one which is much shorter causes a visual gap. Without appropriate height restrictions, the sheer mass of large, new flat-roofed buildings can overpower the surrounding gabled houses. The proposal therefore recommends three height requirements.

First, new buildings in multi-family zoned areas could have a building height not higher than the highest adjacent building or lower than ten percent (10%) lower than the lowest adjacent building. Second, in single and two-family zoned areas, the height of new buildings can be anywhere between ten percent higher or ten percent lower than the adjacent buildings. Third, roofs in new buildings could have a pitch of no less than 5:12 or about 20°. In other words no flat roofs would be permissible.

What could be built next to a typical Old West Side house?

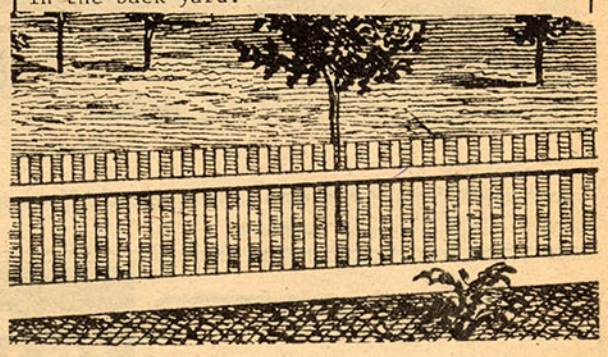


Building Materials

Brick and narrow clapboard are the most common wall surfaces of the original Victorian architecture. In order to retain this scale, the final report provides for the original wall and trim surfaces to be preserved and maintained. If new materials are applied, they may not differ in scale or texture from the original surface or conceal original wood details such as window frames, door frames, corner boards or eave boards. This does not prohibit the use of aluminum or vinyl surfaces if they meet the above requirements.

Fences

Fences also can add or detract from the visual impact of the neighborhood, depending upon their character. Since chain-link or similar type wire fencing detracts from the friendliness of a neighborhood environment, and introduces an inappropriate element into the streetscape, the use of such fencing in the front yard set-back area is prohibited. This does not limit the use of such fencing in the back yard.



Trees

Trees up to 10" in diameter (rather than 6") or those which are diseased or a threat to public health or safety, as determined by the City Forester, may be removed. However, since the mature landscape otherwise contributes so significantly to the visual character of the neighborhood environment, all other trees may be removed only upon written approval of the Historic District Commission.

Porches

Open front porches, typical of neighborhood homes, contribute to the spacious character of the streets and front yards. Therefore, the final report recommends three things: 1) that open front porches and side porches connected to them, be preserved and maintained; 2) that visible replacement materials be similar in scale and material to the original parts, and in particular that open-work metal columns be prohibited; and 3) that the existing City prohibition on enclosure and screening of front porches be strengthened.

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Perspective

The Biggest Hurdle Is Getting Your Party's Backing

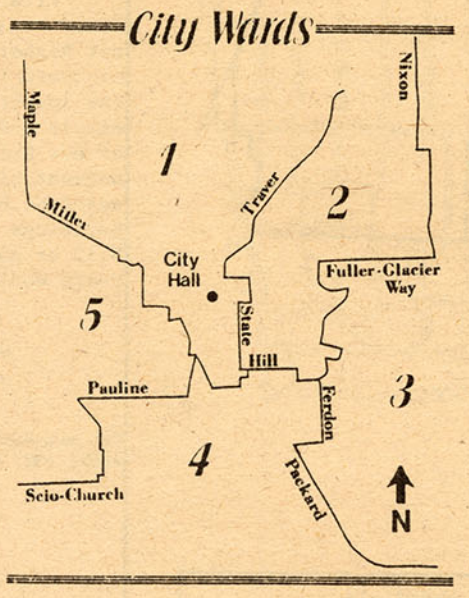
Becoming a Candidate for City Council

The people who get together on Monday nights and decide whether to permit shopping centers, change dog leash laws, build parking structures, review police department service priorities—how are they chosen? We know city council members are elected, of course—five of them a year, one from each ward. And by law, anyone can file to become a candidate for either party's nomination. When more than one candidate files in a ward, there is a primary (held this year on February 21).

But the legally prescribed process of becoming a candidate is only half the story. Among the members of each party's ward organizations, November and December are months of busy discussion and sometimes frantic searches culminating in more or less formal question and answer sessions with potential candidates to find the perfect nominee—a potential winner whom the party likes, or some semblance of such an individual.

We asked five senior council members for details of this important behind-the-scenes activity that occurs each year in both parties. Here is what we found:

The basic process of screening and choosing candidates is the same in both parties. The ward party organizations (loosely consisting of those who have put in time helping the party in previous elections) interview prospective candidates, pick the ones they believe best suited to run, and discourage others from contesting the party-backed nomination with a primary.



Republican councilman Gerry Bell described the process in his ward, the Fifth: "We ask all the Republicans who want to run for council to come to a ward meeting, and there's a question and answer period. The ward structure looks over the candidates and tries to determine who they think would be the best candidate. But this would not prevent anybody else from entering a primary. If they want to take out petitions, then so be it. But they would do it understanding that they did not have the party backing. This would make winning the primary somewhat more difficult."

It is usually essential to gain the approval of fellow party members in one's ward because candidates need the help of the party organization during elections. As Third Ward Republican Bob Henry said, "If the candidate is not accepted by the precinct and ward organizations, those people aren't going to work as hard for you. So you have to cement your relationship with them."

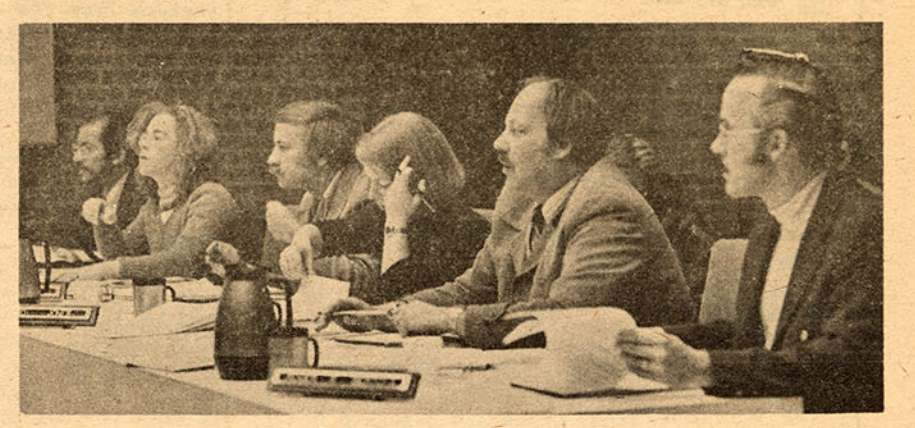
Both parties want to avoid half-interested candidates, uncommitted to the rigors of campaigning and serving on council, who might file for office and thus necessitate the additional work of a primary for very little purpose. Third Ward Republican Roger Bertoia said, "Sometimes you get people who just take out petitions almost on a lark. So we discuss it with them and see if there are ways they can become part of the organization until they get a little more of a feeling of what's going on. If they want to run, of course, no one can stop them. But we try to minimize the chances for a primary because unless they're carefully managed by both people involved, they can become divisive.

Most candidates recognize the disadvantages of not having the ward organization's backing and pull out without a primary if they don't get their party's nod.

In general, the stronger a party is in a given ward (Republicans are strong in Wards 3 and 5, Democrats in Wards 1 and 2; Ward 4 is a swing ward) the more competition there is for the party's nomination due to the greater chance of being elected. That isn't always the case, though. In the heavily student Second Ward, the dominant Democrats have had problems finding eager well-suited candidates in the recent past. The heavy turnover of students has weakened the party organization.

According to Second Ward Democrat Carol Jones, "A common situation is where the three or four active people in the ward who the party people would really like to see run, won't run. So the ward leadership—I shouldn't say ward leadership because we don't have any—I mean, rather, the people who have been involved in the ward consistently—they get together and start thinking of all the people they think will make good council members and good candidates. They'll start grilling those people. Eventually they find one person they feel will make a good candidate who they can talk into running."

Carol Jones' own case shows how, in such a situation, someone with no formal party contact can suddenly find herself running for council. When she first ran in 1973, she said, "They were having a hard time finding somebody in the Second Ward to run. The HRP had won the year before, and the Democrats were looking for somebody who was young and who the students would vote for." The candidate they had wanted to run decided at the last moment he wasn't interested." At that point, Jones continued, "They were really scraping the bottom of the



Dave Breen

From the left, council members Trowbridge and Kenworth, Ward 4; Bell and Belcher, Ward 5; City Attorney Laidlaw.

From the left, council members Allen and Keogh, Ward 1; Greene and Jones, Ward 2; Henry and Bertoia, Ward 3.

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Perspective/continued

barrel, saying 'Think hard, everybody. Can anybody think of someone to run?' A friend of Jones mentioned her as a possibility, noting her qualifications for that particular ward and year: she was young (19), a Residential College urban studies major with a slightly radical image, and a life-long Ann Arbor resident. The ward organization interviewed her and found her "trainable," as she puts it, and approved her as their candidate. "At that time," she remembers, "I would probably not have been able to tell you how many people were on the city council. I'm an example of how they got somebody nobody had ever heard of."

Dave Breen

Carol Jones ran for council after a frantic search by 2nd Ward Democrats for a suitable candidate.

Gerald Bell is an example of the opposite extreme: a candidate who spent years planning for the right moment to throw his hat in the ring. He told us, "I was the Fifth Ward Republican chairman and had worked for the party since 1969 —some five years. I'd been a campaign chairman, ward chairman, and had put in a lot of work in the process. In working with city Republicans, I had expressed a desire years ago to become a city councilman. It was a matter of getting rid of previous committments—mainly Jaycees and other organizations I was in — so I would have time. I virtually put myself in a spot so that when it was time to look for a candidate, I was right there. Becoming a councilman was my goal."

Roger Bertoia was highly motivated to run, too — motivated to a large extent by his indignation in the early 1970's over the way the council (dominated by Democrats and HRP members under Mayor Bob Harris) was handling the city's affairs. "Decisions were made purely on the basis of social conscience

Dave Breen

Gerald Bell was active in 5th Ward politics for five years before running for council himself.

without any appreciation of the resources needed to implement a program," he felt. But the first time Bertoia ran, in 1973, he didn't have the backing of the Third Ward Republican organization, and lost a hard-fought primary race to Bob Henry. "After I lost to Henry," he said, "I spent a full year campaigning to make sure that wouldn't happen again. There was never any question in my mind that I was going to become a councilman." He won the following year.

Bob Henry was approached close to the deadline for filing as a candidate. His major previous political participation had been as president of the Pittsfield School Parent-Teacher Organization. "Some people I knew as president of the PTO who were also party members approached me to run for council," he told us. "I took a look at that and said, 'Yeah, that sounds like an interesting idea.' So I did it. At that time I had absolutely no idea what was involved in being on council."

For First Ward Democrat Liz Keogh a last-minute withdrawl of the strongest

Dave Breen

Roger Bertoia's candidacy was prompted by dissatisfaction with city council policies when Bob Harris was mayor.

prospective party nominee was what led to her running. Unlike fellow council members, she had held public office before as the 15th District county commissioner from 1972 to 1974 (she was then called Liz Taylor). After running unsuccessfully against Perry Bullard in the Democratic primary for state representative, which kept her from running again for commissioner, she was approached by First Ward party members and asked to run for council. She won in 1975.

Last-minute chance circumstances are a frequent factor in who runs for council because those determined to become candidates like Bell or Bertoia are exceptions. Why are so few feverently motivated to become candidates? Explanations differ. According to Bertoia, "There are very few people who take that step (of becoming a candidate) because you put your ego on the line at that point. All of a sudden people can sit back in their rocking chairs and take shots at you, and not always to your face."

Keogh believes there are "many potential quality candidates capable of running, but what they correctly perceive as the hassle, the thanklessness of it, discourages them."

But the enormous time committment is the most potent factor in checking the enthusiasm of many otherwise interested candidates. Typically it can take at least 20 hours a week while campaigning and through the first year of office. And it can be much more time consuming that that, depending on how many committees a council member is on and how much extra research into problem areas is done. Council members whose regular occupation gives them flexible working schedules can make noon lunch meetings or spend an afternoon at City Hall talking to administrators. For those who have to stay on the job from nine to five, being on city council would not likely be a very attractive idea.

Even for a self-employed lawyer like Bob Henry, whose office is just across the street from City Hall, the time required is a strain. Those extra hours spent on city business have to come from somewhere, and for him (as for most council members) they come from his family. "That's where the real hurt is," he said. "We caucus on Sunday night, the council meets Monday night, most of the committee meetings are at night. It got to a point there for a while where I was never home at all in the evenings. That was the deciding factor in not running again, because my kids are growing up, and I want to spend some time with them."

For Carol Jones, the situation is easier. A student when elected, she has no family

Dave Breen

Robert Henry's stepping stone to council was being president of the Pittsfield Parent-Teacher Organization.

and has been able to devote most of her attention to council work. As she sees it, people in two basic types of situations are attracted to council: "You have to be at a certain state of settledness with your economic and personal life, or else you have to be in such a state of upheaval and uncertainty on those two levels that you can simply put your life together for two years around the council. As a result, that's why you find people who are rather well-to-do, older and settled, or else you find the young, unemployed types, the unsettled ones."

Gerald Bell, a drug salesman with two children, views the time committment of being on council more in terms of how people like to spend their time: "There's the old saying, 'Different strokes for different folks.' People say they don't have time to be on council. Well, that's only prioritized time. We all have hobbies. Woodworking, hunting, gardening, TV, and so forth. And many feel that if they were spending the time I spend on council, it would detract from their free time. But for me, council work is how I want to spend my free time. I really don't have any other hobbies. This is my fun, my relaxation, my hobby more or less."

Dave Breen

Liz Keogh had already been a county commissioner for one term when approached to run for council.

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A Happy Choice of a Career

Johnnie Rush, Barber

As a self-employed barber, Johnnie Rush puts in 11½ hour-long days, five days a week, with few if any vacations. But he has no regrets. "Barbering has been the thing for me," he says. "I always wanted to be my own person, my own boss. I didn't like the idea of being dictated to and pushed around." So, after one unsatisfying year in college, two years in the army, and a year of wandering around, he decided "Whatever I was going to do, I was going to learn me a *trade* first." In 1957 he enrolled in the one-year course at the Michigan Barbers College on East Adams in Detroit.

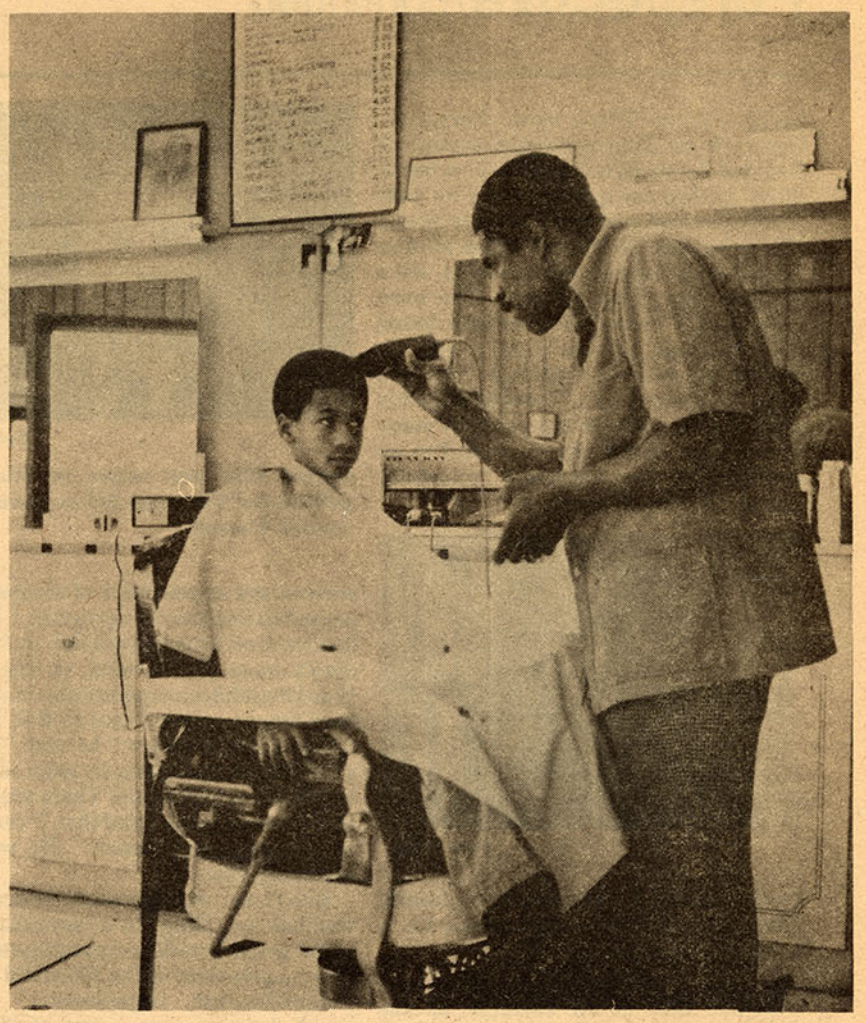
Johnnie Rush finishes with an older customer while young Cedric Gulley waits and squirms.

Why barbering?, we asked. With four younger brothers' hair to cut, Rush grew up having plenty of first-hand experience with it. Barbering was a trade where a black man could get ahead on his own in the 1950's (unlike most union-dominated trades). And as a boy growing up in Starkville, Mississippi, Rush had always admired the barbers he'd seen. With their snappy white jackets they seemed "real cool, very professional," he remembers. "Those guys always looked good doing their job." Barbering, he feels, is an interesting line of work with a lot of social contact, "meeting people from all walks of life. You learn something every day."

After graduating from barbers' college, Rush spent two years apprenticing with John Easley on Ann Street, then passed his state examination. He had hopes of getting his brothers into the business to start a chain, but to no avail.

In 1961 Rush opened his own shop in the old Mally Harness Shop at 123 East Ann, and he invested substantially to remodel it. But within months the apartment upstairs burned out, and the entire building was condemned and demolished. So Rush moved down the street to 115 East Ann.

The 1960's were trying times for barbers, black and white. The Beatles and the "Black Is Beautiful" trend introduced longer hair styles that needed less attention. Older barbers set in their ways were hurt worst by what Rush calls "the change." But Rush's training and interest enabled him to go with the change. "When I first started out," he says, "I wanted to learn everything. I learned all the processes in school. (At that time hair straightening was very important.) Later I'd go down to the college on my day off and see what the students were doing, see the changes for the future, keep abreast of the styles from other places." So, if someone walked into the shop and asked for a Quo Vadis cut or a Superfly before these styles had hit Ann Arbor, Johnnie Rush would be prepared.



Cedric Gulley gets the treatment from barber Johnnie Rush.

The versatile Rush also does scalp treatments, clay and cream facials, permanents and hair straightening, in addition to cutting all kinds of hair, male and female, black and white.

Diplomacy is a necessary skill in barbering, Rush finds. What looks good in a style book won't necessarily work out or look good on the person who picks that style out. And too many hair treatments can damage hair. A good barber advises his customers based on the realities of their hair and the shape of their head and face. Rush's basic advice is: "It's best to accept your God-given conditions." Books of hairstyles have created problems for him by raising customers' hopes of looking like professional models, so Rush has stopped keeping them around the shop. The reading material there today consists of *Ebony, Sepia, Jet,* and the *Detroit Free Press.*

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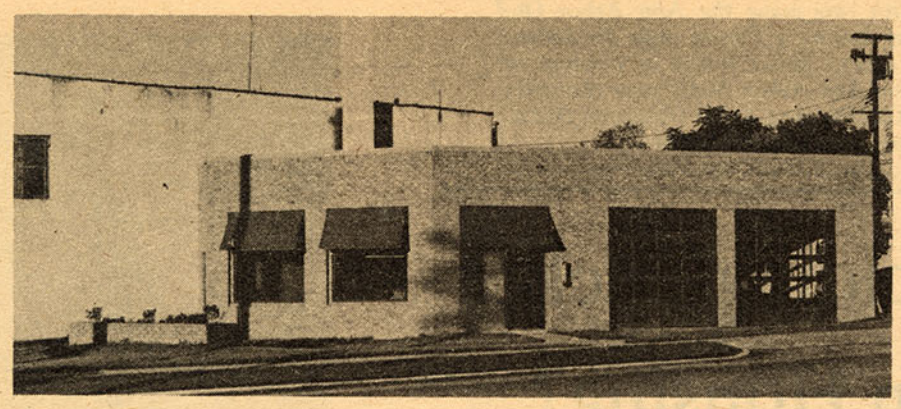
When Johnnie Rush started working on the 100 block of Ann Street, it was a major social center of Ann Arbor's black community, "a place where people went to see what was happening." The Derby Bar, home of the popular performer Washboard Willie, had an interracial clientele. But over the years drugs, robberies, and some shootings made the location uncomfortable for a barbershop with a family trade. Being a tenant in somebody else's building was frustrating, too. Rush's rent was going up while the building itself was deteriorating.

To Johnnie Rush, the situation became a matter of relocating or getting into another line of work altogether.

Reasonably-priced small commercial properties in good locations can be hard to come by in prosperous college towns like Ann Arbor. But the many gas stations abandoned in recent years have been a boon for the little man. Rush found one at Broadway and Moore that had been partly destroyed when a semi truck ran into it. With his savings, business and personal loans, and a $3000 revenue-sharing grant to minority businesses, he has remodelled it into a trim brick-faced building with a lawn and planter where the gas pumps used to be. The garage part is rented to Jones Auto Detail, which waxes and polishes cars.



The old Pure Oil station at Broadway and Moore is now an attractive barbershop.

Barbering has been good for Johnnie Rush. At 44, he's his own boss, he owns his home and residential income property as well, as well as his own business and the building it's in. Barbering, he says, has been the source of "stability to maintain my personal obligations, to see my kids through school." It's paid for junior-high tuition at St. Thomas and for a lot of music lessons for daughters Rhonda, 15, and Shawn, 14, who play piano, flute, and clarinet and attend music camp each summer. Son Johnnie Rush III, age 9, is interested in drums, influenced by his musical mother Betty.

Rush doesn't keep the secrets of success to himself. "Pursue your skill, whatever it may be," he advises young people. "It behooves anyone to ascertain and develop their skills. With determination and motivation, no matter how hard your trials might be, you can reach your objectives."

He'd like to encourage more young men to go into barbering. (Rush interested Roosevelt Rowry, proprietor of Rosie's Hair Styling Den at 103 South Fourth Ave., in barbering, and Rowry apprenticed under him.) And he'd like to fill the empty chair in his shop. But the prospects don't look bright right now. There's a shortage of barbers, especially those who cater to black people. Young people don't like the long hours necessary to do well, but Rush doesn't mind the hours (7:30 AM to 7:00 PM, Tuesday through Saturday) because he likes his work. •

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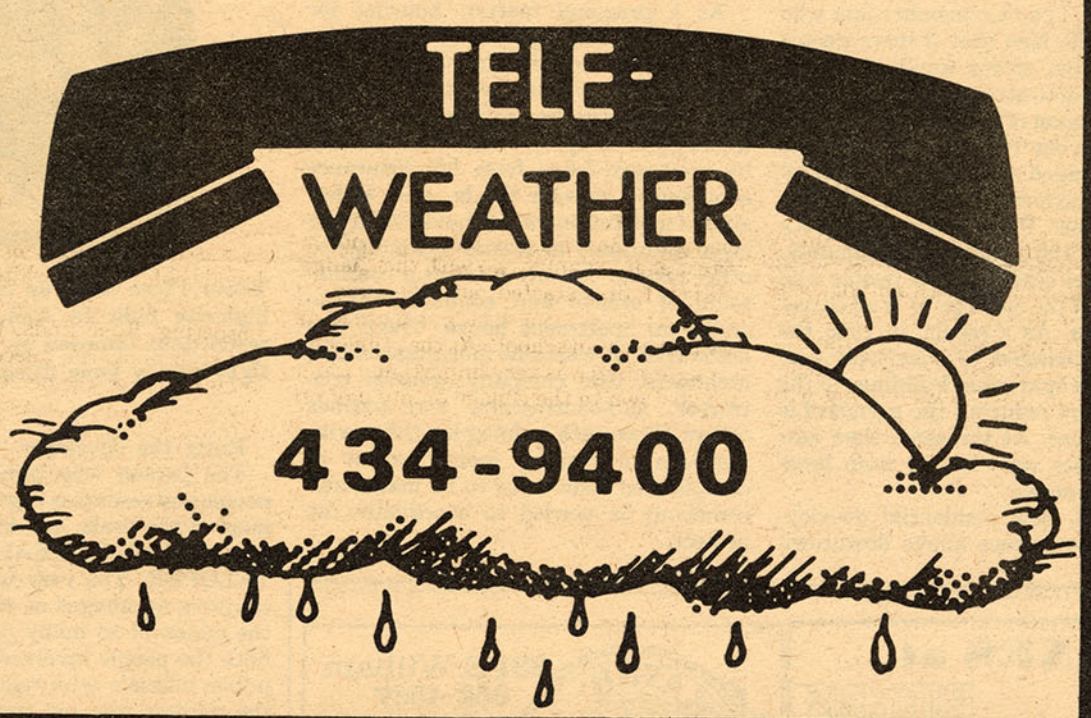

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Forum

With this issue the Ann Arbor Observer *begins a Forum page for letters and essays about topics of interest in central Ann Arbor. Send your thoughts to FORUM, Ann Arbor Observer, 502 E. Huron, Ann Arbor, 48104.*

What's Holding Back Downtown Housing?

By CLAN CRAWFORD

Along about 1961 people began to realize that things were changing in central Ann Arbor. Arborland, our first shopping center, opened, and downtown shopkeepers were having a hard time. The city population was then growing rapidly, doubling in about ten years. Our car-clogged streets were widened, but compromisingly, to save trees. So many buildings were being bulldozed to build the city's system of parking lots and structrues that we began to wonder if there would be anywhere to go after we parked.

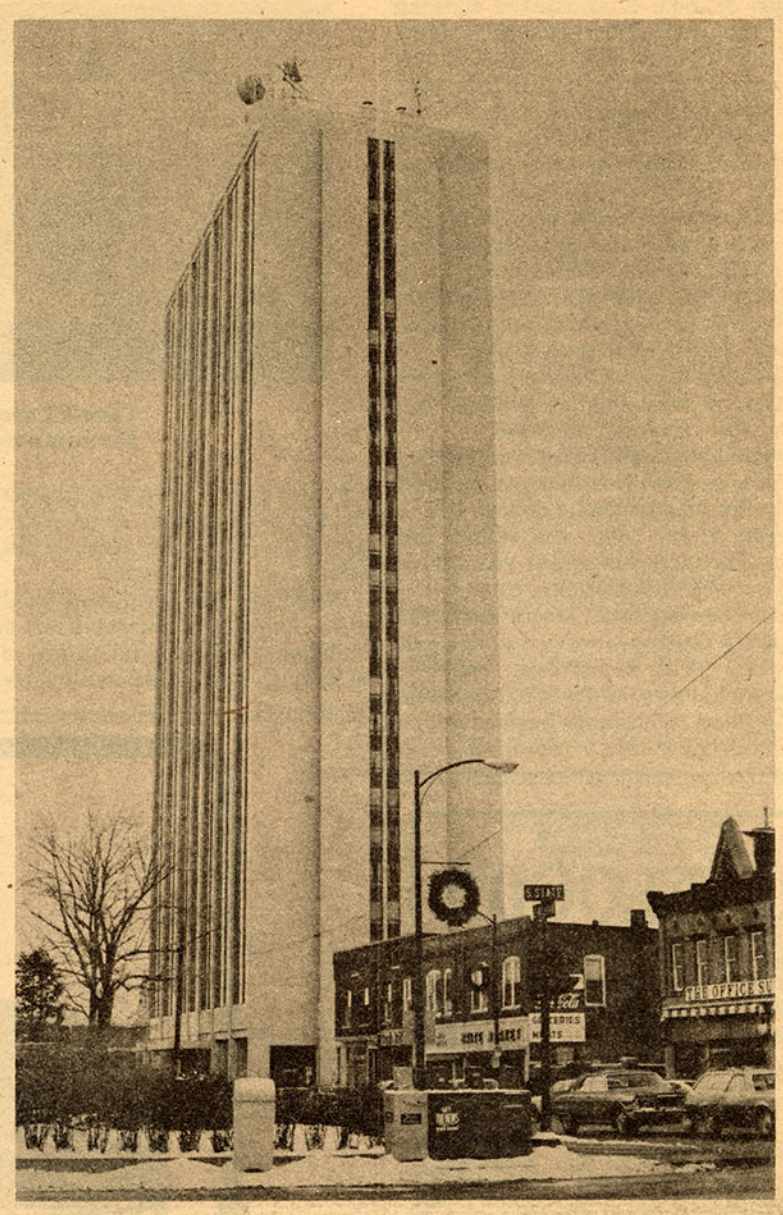
Somebody, I can't remember just who it was, got the idea that if more people lived downtown, stores would do better without having to attract extra cars. This attitude was soon reflected in city policy, specifically in our 1963 zoning ordinance which encouraged downtown housing by eliminating the former height limit of ten stories. Tower Plaza and University Towers were the result. Unfortunately, these highrises scared a lot of people who saw visions of the canyons of Wall Street in Ann Arbor. As a result, in 1965 the zoning was changed to effectively prevent high-rise apartment buildings in the central area by reducing the permissible intensity of use. At the same time new residential uses were barred from large areas of downtown.

Since 1975, new residential development of vacant space above downtown stores is once again permitted (after ten years of being prohibited), and a handful of new apartments have been built there. But many of us think that the central area needs hundreds of new apartments, of which the available lofts above stores can provide only a tiny fraction.

What does it take to get apartment houses built downtown?

We can and probably will attract some federally-subsidized housing for the elderly. This is largely a matter of waiting in line for money and using all available political clout to cheat in the line. However, subsidized housing is generally limited to low-income people. Both sociologically and economically, a mix of income levels is preferable.

As a practical matter, housing for people of average or above-average income must come from the private sector of the economy. That means it must be financed partly be investment capital (money put up by the owners), but mostly by mortgage loans from life insurance companies, pension funds, and a few similar institutions which hold and invest large quantities of money belonging to other people. Usually it takes a combination of efforts and commitments to create an apartment house. There is a landowner, at least one mortgage lender, architects, title company, general contractor, sub-contractors, and various others. Since each is doing his thing with the idea of making money, a lot of complicated deals have to be made, and somebody is needed to coordinate the project.



Tower Plaza went up in 1965, the last high-rise built in Ann Arbor. Zoning restrictions imposed by city council and tight money have discouraged any further such projects. But city hall is now looking for ways once again to encourage such developments.

Enter the developer.

The person who brings all of these people and resources together, negotiates most of the deals, and keeps the project going, is called a REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER. The very use of that term conjures up images of evil and greed in the minds of so many people, including both the people involved in the job, the public officials who regulate them, and the citizens who put pressure on public officials, that the developer role is difficult to play, and even more difficult to play well.

The developer assesses a project's profitability. A developer will decide to build or not to build an apartment house in downtown Ann Arbor, or anywhere else, by combining many factors to see whether the project will be sufficiently profitable to attract all of the necessary participants: investors, landowner, mortgage lenders, contractors, etc. He adds land price to cost of development and construction to determine how much money is required. He then must determine whether the rents attainable are sufficient to pay operating costs, taxes,

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and mortgage payments, and still leave enough left over for profits to induce the prospective owners to invest money in the project. (The developer himself can be an owner, an mortgage lender, or simply a promoter who gets a fee or a percentage of his efforts.)

The amount of profit required varies, from time to time, depending on the profitability of other competing investment opportunities such as stocks, bonds, savings accounts, and apartment houses in other communities.

Running an apartment house is quite a hassle. To attract investment it must yield substantially more than bonds or savings accounts where the investor has little to do or worry about. High-rise construction is expensive, costing much more per unit than low-rise multiple-family developments with which they must compete. Of the half dozen unsubsidized high-rise apartment houses built in Ann Arbor, at least three have passed out of the hands of the original owners because rents collected were insufficient to meet required cash outlays, and one has been through the wringer twice.

How can we influence development decisions on the local level, to encourage apartment house building downtown?

Some of the factors are not subject to local control at all. The workings of the world economic system fix mortgage interest rates, a very important item, and building materials costs as well. A collective bargaining process determines the cost of construction labor; provisions of labor contracts in the surrounding region and the nation influence collective bargaining. Rents that can be charged downtown are limited by competition from rents charged for apartments in outlying areas of Ann Arbor and vicinity. And, of course, we cannot control the rate of return investors think they can get on other investments.

Let us consider, then, the factors influencing the developer's go/no-go decision which we can control.

1) The law of supply and demand determines, roughly, the price of land. By increasing the supply of land available for apartment-house development, we can lower the price and make development more attractive. In 1965 city council did the opposite through zoning when it prohibited apartments where they had formerly been permitted. It also decreased the attractiveness of buildable downtown land to a developer by reducing the number of apartment units that could be built on each parcel.

2) We exercise some control over property taxes (where 17-20% of the rent money goes) when we vote on requests to increase the millage.

3) Delays in securing approval from city hall cost the developer interest, taxes, and professional fees. We can control this by simplifying and clarifying procedures.

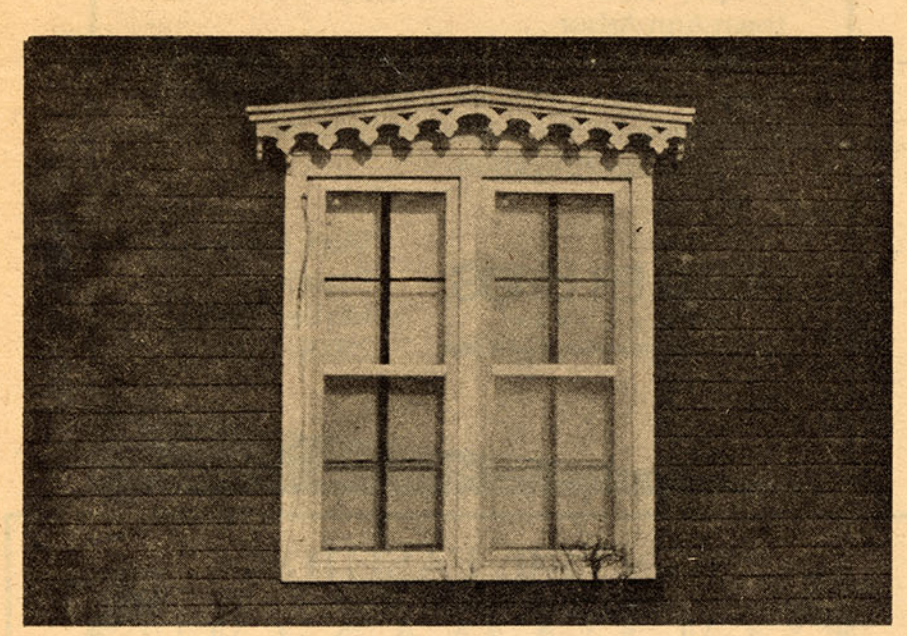
(Building code requirements also affect construction costs. Ann Arbor has generally been considered competitive in this respect.)

4) The constant threat of rent control has been a very discouraging feature of the local scene. Why should anyone invest in apartments in a town with strong and persistent public pressure for rent control, when there is good demand for apartments in other municipalities where the public is less hostile to landlords?

Despite continued population growth in Ann Arbor and despite the nation-wide building boom in the late 1960's and early 1970's, no high-rise apartment has been started downtown since 1965. Few medium-density apartments have been built. Obviously we have not acted to make those factors subject to local control attractive to developers.

At the moment, the combination of high interest rates, increasing construction costs, operating costs, and taxes has slowed apartment building throughout the country. Very likely, however, this problem is short-term on the national level. Locally, however, if we want more apartments downtown, we must consider whether we are willing to make the needed changes in our zoning ordinances, procedures, and attitudes so that when apartment building picks up, central Ann Arbor will be regarded as an attractive place to build. •

Clan Crawford, a zoning lawyer with a state-wide practice, has been observing with interest development and change in downtown Ann Arbor since he came here to law school in 1950. Professionally he's a leading authority on zoning in the state of Michigan. Personally, he loves cosmopolitan, densely-developed urban areas.



Test Of the Town

By BOB BRECK

Where was this photo made? Let us know the specific location via postcard or letter mailed to the Ann Arbor Observer, 502 East Huron, Ann Arbor 48104. Senders of the first two correct answers received will get their choice of any one of the thousands of records available at the Liberty Music Shop, 417 East Liberty. No special delivery entries, please.

The subject of this month's photo is not far from Mack School.

A lot of people all over town must like the keyhole window in the big white house at 1036 Oakland at the corner of Tappan, which was featured in December's Test of the Town. We were deluged with so many replies that we couldn't acknowledge them all. Several were hand-delivered. In the future all entries must be delivered by regular mail to be considered. In the probable event of more than two correct answers being delivered at once, the first two we see will be the winners. December's winners, Peggy Gladstone and Mary Jo Pugh, won albums of their choice from the Liberty Music Shop.

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An Omission

Due to a printer's error, David Capp's photograph of Jean Paul Slusser reproduced in last month's issue of the *Ann Arbor Observer*, appeared without an accompanying copyright symbol and Mr. Capp's name.

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Forum/continued

OPINIONS

Why isn't parking a community affair the same as the city parks, streets, and library? We all use these city services, and we all should pay for them.

I am astonished that a Federal building was built without adequate parking. Then to tell the business community that *we* have to provide the extra parking is especially unfair. I see no profits coming to my firm from this office building. My parking lot is loaded with poachers already.

I am for more parking, but the cost should be shared city-wide. I am opposed to huge concrete structures that cost at least $3000 a car space. Parking should be surface parking only. There are city-owned vacant lots that can be used.

Today relatively new concrete parking structures are already in need of repair. To me this shows poor management. Women do not care for these buildings, and they are not well suited for short-term parking. A people-mover such as the one at the Hyatt House in Dearborn connecting perimeter parking on surface lots with downtown could be practical and unique.

Marty Schlenker

Marty Schlenker owns and manages Schlenker Hardware, 215 W. Liberty.

.....

Some opponents of more new parking structures feel that by 1990, instead of the 2500 additional parking space demand predicted in the Circulation Plan, we will need no more spaces than we already have. Increasing gas prices and/or energy conservation measures could cause a decline in auto use and increased use of public transit. Then, they say, if we built new parking structures today, we'd be left with a couple of hulky unusable monuments to the automobile.

The assumption underlying this argument is that, once built, a parking structure will always be a parking structure. True, the sturctures we have now cannot be feasibly converted to other uses. There is not enough space between floors to accommodate all the systems (heating, plubming, electrical, etc.) that make a building work. But it *is* possible to design parking structures which are easily convertible to other building uses later on—

—either by providing enough space between floors to accommodate all the building hardware (although this results in wasted verticle space and higher construction costs for use as a carport)

—or by building the carport so that every other floor can be easily removed for conversion to building use. This provides efficient car storage, yet leaves the option open for conversion later on.

By building convertible parking structures, current parking needs can be met without making inalterable decisions about the future, and without pock-marking downtown with more surface lots. The city could require convertible designs for any new carports built.

Carol Sullivan

Carol Sullivan is an urban planning student and staff person for Ann Arbor Tomorrow.

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This holiday season marks the conclusion of my second year at Hertler Bros. What a great two years it has been! There was uncertainty two years ago about the plight of downtown and particularly of this old-fashioned farm store. Those worries are past now. Hertler Bros. has found its 20th-century niche in a wonderfully vital downtown Ann Arbor.

We thank everyone we have met and done business with for patronizing us and thus giving us the opportunity to be part of this great revitalization.

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Local History

Mr. Wetherbee's Reminiscences, Conclusion

Boy Meets Girl on Main St., And Bert Wetherbee Is Wed

Wagner & Company at 125 S. Main Street. Bert Wetherbee used to clean these windows daily waiting to catch a glimpse of the girl in the tan coat on her way to work at Mack & Co.

This installment concludes the Observer's *abridged memoirs of Herbert T. Wetherbee, a life-long Ann Arbor resident who died last February. Mr. Wetherbee was in the men's clothing business for fifty years, beginning July 22, 1901, when he went to work for Wagner & Company on Main Street after completing eighth grade.*

About this time I was raised to $3.00 a week, so I started to pay room and board. Gave Mother $2.00 a week for my board, room, and washing. I felt big-hearted, so I took 50 cents and bought a pint of oysters, a pint of milk, and a half-pound of crackers and went home early that afternoon. Mother, who loved oysters, and I had a banquet. It was a little change from the potato soup and soda fritters, which we had regularly. I would like to have one of those soda fritters like Mother used to make, right now. We lived on them most of the winter.

My clothes were always poor, but Mother kept them all patched up. The last pair of knee pants she made for me out of an old overcoat. Had a pair of girl's stockings and button shoes. That was my wardrobe until Mother made a deal with Lindenschmidt Apfel Co. for me to get a suit. The agreement was that I pay 50 cents a week until the $6.00 suit was paid for. This I did and finally had my own suit. . . .

Three years later Bert Wetherbee was still working for Wagner's, but his interests and preoccupations were shifting to a more romantic direction.

Unconsciously I began to watch people going to work. I noticed, going to work at Mack & Company, a small young girl wearing a red tam, with dark hair and a curl with a red ribbon hanging over her shoulders. I used to watch her every morning while I was cleaning the windows. Something (must have been the love bug) seemed to attract me to her, so I made up my mind to meet her the first time I could.

Well, this is how it happened. Down by the boat house at the river where the youngsters used to gather on Sundays, some who could afford it used to rent a boat and go up the river for a ride. The rest of us would hang around with nothing else to do, boys and girls alike. Among this crowd were several girls, and one was the object of my affections, with a pretty light tan coat, just new. The boys would throw snowballs at anything that moved. John Sidney and I were throwing at the girls, and I hit the girl with the light tan coat and spotted it with water or snow. I was sorry and went over to tell her so. Finally asked to see her home, and that, I think, was the beginning of our courtship.

Agnes lived up on Spring Street, and we kids used to coast down Spring Street on our bobsleds. Whenever I could manage it, she was an occupant on our bobsled. I would make an effort to take her home whenever I could. I managed to get into her house on my seventeenth birthday and have been told about it ever since.

Wagner & Company sold one-half their store on Main Street to the State Savings Bank. They built a new bank building on this site (which is now called National Bank & Trust) on the corner of Washington and Main. Wagner & Company built a new store on State Street at the head of Liberty and we moved both stores up to State Street. However, that didn't interfere with my seeing Agnes.

One night we were out for a walk with the usual instructions to be in by nine o'clock. But on our way home we saw a fire way up on Cedar Bend Drive, and we followed people way up to see the whole hillside on fire. We didn't hesitate long, for it was past our nine o'clock allowance. We got home and the old man met us at the door and threatened to wale Agnes. I overheard it and went back to the house. Walking up to him, I told him not to touch her, or I would do some waling myself. Told him it was my fault, and if there was any licking to be done, it would be done to me. He quieted down, and we never had any trouble after that.

When Agnes and I walked home together, we always took the longest way home. Often we would walk up Chubb Road (this old street name was later changed to the more picturesque Sunset Road) to Cemetery Ridge in front of the Catholic cemetery, where we'd sit under a big tree along the road, watching the lights of the city and planning the future as best we could. . . . By now we were going steady. We used to cover all the neighborhood, walking up hill and down. That's the only way we could travel, for there were no autos in those days, and to rent a horse and buggy took too much money from our small allowance. We were saving what we could with prospects of marriage in view.

I left Wagner & Co. and came down to Reule, Conlin & Fiegel for $12.00 a week. Worked there a year and finally got married. Had saved $110.00 and had two suits of clothes. I wore them a long time, and I can see both of them now. One was a brown snake-striped with black, and the other was a mail carrier's blue. They cost me 10 and 12 dollars, on sale.

We rented the Hiscock house on North Main Street, #807, and both of us devoted much time to fixing it up to live in. We finally got things in shape, and on September 30, 1907, we were married by Father Kelly in St. Thomas Parish House, with Emily Rahr and Louis Howard for sponsors. After a wedding breakfast at my home, Agnes and I went to Michigan City, Indiana for our honeymoon trip. We returned to what was to be our home for a number of years. Finally we bought the place, 807 North Main Street, on $15.00 a week, my wages at the time. ●

Seen from the Courthouse tower in 1879, this is Main at Huron in the Age of the Horse. The fancy tall buildings at the left remain today, occupied by Muehlig's and Goodyear's. Schools, homes, and factories dot the hills beyond downtown—the early buildings of the Old West Side, now a nationally-recognized historic district. *(Sam Sturgis Collection)*

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Food & Drink

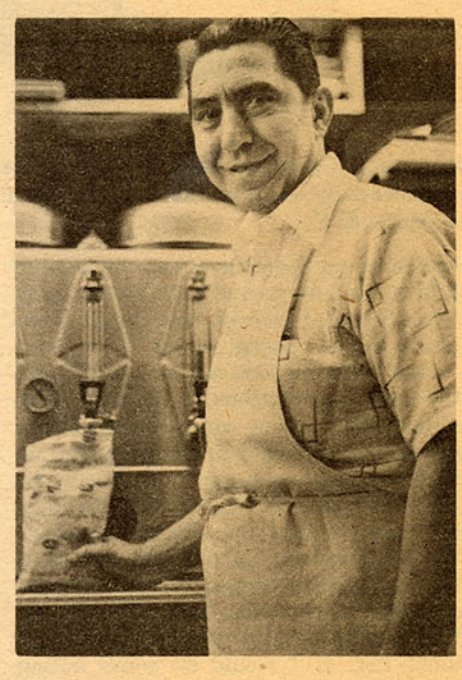
Meal of the Month

Frank's Crisp French Toast

When Gus Mermigas came to live in Ann Arbor from his native Greece in 1952, he embarked on an 18-year career as a cook, mainly working for university dorms and serving as part-time chef in most of the major restaurants in town, including Weber's and Win Schuler's.

Finally, after all those years, he had saved up enough money to buy his own restaurant. The opportunity came three years ago when his cousin Frank Petropoulos, who owned and ran Frank's Restaurant at 334 Maynard, decided to sell out and head back to his home town of Tripolis (where Gus comes from, too), to live a life of leisure. (Frank's Restaurant began as the final location of the fabled Red's Rite Spot diner, after it moved from its longtime location at Maynard and Liberty.)

Gus's place has a devoted following that has remained loyal and actually grown even after the snazzy new McDonald's restaurant was built across the street in the fall of 1975. "If you've got good food," says Gus, "you don't have to worry."



Gus Mermigas, owner, manager, and cook at Frank's, displays his high-quality, high-price Cadillac coffee.

One of Gus's more popular dishes is French toast, which Louisa Pieper, staff member of the Historic District Commission, has nominated as our meal of the month. Headquartered in the nearby Kempf House on Division, Louisa and city historian Wystan Stevens often make early morning trecks to Frank's, where they like to order French toast. "'It's crisp, not soggy," Louisa says, "and has an interesting hint of cinnamon flavor added." Because of all the sugar, Louisa doesn't recommend it daily, but it's a very tasty treat. Gus says he developed the recipe himself, based on how he saw French toast made in the restaurants where he has worked for years. He takes thick wedges of bread, dips them in a pancake batter of just the right consistency, not too thick or too thin, sprinkles a bit of cinnamon sugar on top, and cooks them on a grill which is 350° (any cooler and they will stick to the grill).

Louisa Pieper pours homemade syrup on the French toast at Frank's Restaurant.

Gus serves his French toast with a generous pitcher of syrup which he makes himself from sugar, water, and Mapolene flavoring.

The coffee at Frank's Restaurant also rates raves from many. That's because, Gus told us proudly, it's the highest priced coffee his restaurant supplier carries—called Cadillac, of course. Quality doesn't come cheap; the price is forty cents a cup, but that does include refills with meals. •

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